



“SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE MINDED PEOPLE AND HOLD ONTO YOUR DREAM.”



Melanie Sandoval 33
Salish
Two Eagle High School
University of Montana
Nkʷusm School Founder



Chaney Bell 31
Salish
Ronan High School
Salish Kootenai College
Nkʷusm School Founder

Walking into the Nkʷusm (One Fire) school in Arlee, Montana, you are immediately greeted in the Salish language. The children rush in with full backpacks and head to their various classrooms, the smell of home cooking wafting from the kitchen. “We started with nothing,” says co-founder Melanie Sandoval. “We had three kids but no chairs, no office supplies, nothing.” Melanie, Tachini Pete, Chaney Bell and Joshua Brown were all in their early twenties when they decided to start the school. All they had was the strong belief that language was the key to reclaiming identity and the determination to bring that opportunity to their community. Now the Nkʷusm school offers a full academic program through the unique view of the Salish world.

The four founders all recognize the importance of education in becoming who you are as a person. “Find out who you are,” says Chaney, “then you can go from there.” Most importantly, says Joshua, who struggled with the significance of school when he was younger, “find relevance in what you are doing. Learn how to read well, write well, speak well and think. Then you can do anything you want.” For more information about the Nkʷusm school go to: salishworld.com

“OUR PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE STRONGER AND STRONGER BECAUSE OF LANGUAGE. THE MORE WE STUDY LANGUAGE, THE MORE THE CREATOR IS SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO US. IT FEELS LIKE A REAL, TANGIBLE CONNECTION BECAUSE OF HOW PRECISE OUR WORDS ARE, HOW OUR LANGUAGE GIVES EVERY PERSON THE ABILITY TO HAVE OUR OWN PERSONAL VIEWPOINT IN THE WORLD.” – TACHINI PETE



Tachini Pete 36
Navajo/Salish
Columbia Falls High School
Salish Kootenai College;
University of Montana Western
Nkʷusm School Founder



Joshua Brown 34
Salish
St. Ignatius High School
Salish Kootenai College
Nkʷusm School Founder



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